

gs at BPA



and special BPA events. One of their earliest recognition day at headquarters.

Photo by Nick Christmas

got together to play for about 350 folks at the party that year.”

Miller says everyone had fun and after Christmas they decided they could play together “to keep our chops in shape and do more things musically.” So they began to meet to rehearse once a week over the noon hour. “We have a good place in the basement of the 911 building,” Miller says.

As word spread about the group, more BPA musicians showed up to join the band. Members come and go as they stay interested or are able to practice, Miller says. The band now performs with around 22 musicians. More than a dozen others have played with the group in the past.

How did the band get its name? Miller says it formed at the time BPA was going through its major reorganization and start of downsizing. “RIF (Reduction in Force) was being talked about a lot – that it might apply to BPA,” Miller says. “VSI (Voluntary Separation Incentive) was new and a lot of people were taking VSIs, or early outs.”

Miller says, “We talked about several different ideas but settled on ‘RIF and the Early Outs’ as being right for the time.” And how did he come to be the “RIF” of the group? “Half a dozen of us met over lunch in a conference room to talk about organizing the group,” Miller says. “I had thought about it for some time and seemed to have most of the ideas about what we could do. So when we broke up the group had made me the bandleader.”

Miller says that except for a place to practice, the band doesn’t get any funding or help from BPA. “Our playing time and performances are free. And when we perform for a BPA event, we would be there anyway,” he says. The group makes up the time it takes to set up for events.

Members got real enthused when they formed, Miller says. “The players own their instruments and music stands,” he says, “but we needed to buy music so we began a collection to raise money. We put a spittoon out when we play and we get donations for sheet music.”

Word about the band has spread outside of BPA and people have asked the group to play at other events. They recently played for a fun night at the Holladay Park Plaza retirement community near the Lloyd Center.

But so far the group hasn’t ventured outside the main Portland/Vancouver area. And Miller says it’s not very likely to do so in the future. “People don’t want to be away from their homes and families at night,” Miller says. “So when we get a request or offer, I always run it by the band first.”

Miller says, “The primary reason we formed is to be able to play together, practice and improve over the lunch hour at work.” He says, “We specifically like to play for BPA events. As long as we have a place to practice and the people want us, we’ll have a reason to stay around.”

So that’s the story of how “RIF and the Early Outs” came about, and their role as the unofficial BPA band. What about the players? Suzy Sivyer of Transmission interviewed band members in recent months. The accompanying anecdotes are excerpts from interviews.

— Jack Odgaard, editor

Strings, wind and keys

Brant Crabbe grew up in Hawaii where his dad played the ukulele and sang Hawaiian songs at home. Crabbe took uke lessons, then learned the trombone and finally took up the guitar in high school. A highlight for him was touring and playing in Europe with his Kamehameha High School band in the summer of 1973.

Linda Krugel says she came from a musical farm family of five kids in Minnesota. “Everyone sang, danced, played piano and one other instrument,” she says. “I started on clarinet but my fingers were too small to cover the holes so I changed to flute in the seventh grade.” She remembers the 1989 Rose Bowl Parade when the One More Time Around Again Marching Band marched and played at Pasadena. “We had over 500 players and our sound was incredible,” she says. “We played Louie-Louie and we just knocked them dead because we were so much fun.”

Roger Whittaker says he loves music, but he didn’t play an instrument until college. He took up the guitar and then got interested in jazz piano. He has been studying it for years and just started playing the keyboard with the BPA band. His highlight and embarrassing moment of his musical career are one and the same. He helped a friend promote a 1997 Herbie Hancock concert in Portland. “We borrowed an old white Mercedes to pick him up at the airport,” Whittaker says. “It sounded like the engine was going to explode when we got on the Interstate. He had a PC with him and I was so nervous that I dropped it putting it in the trunk. He didn’t want a ride back to the airport.”

Brant Crabbe



Linda Krugel

Randi Thomas

Roger Whittaker

Mike Street



Mark Pierce



Cole Barnett

The group with the beat

Harold Grappe has played drums since he was nine. He played all through grade school and high school, and today also plays in two other groups. He remembers a 1988 jazz festival at Bellevue, Wash., when he played a Buddy Rich drum solo and got a standing ovation from the crowd of 200 plus.

Mark Pierce hails

from Virginia where he learned to play the drums in grade school. He played in bands all through school and then picked up the bass guitar at Virginia State University. He began to write his own music and lyrics and played in nightclub bands while getting his degree.

Mike Street also started on another instrument. He played trumpet in Portland grade school and then switched to tuba in the eighth grade. His highlight came, he says, when he got to play with RIF and the Early Outs and then

joined Portland’s One More Time Around band.

Photos by Sherry Lind

Many talented folks play in other groups – see page 6.

RIF and the Early Outs – current players

- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Neal Adolf.....            | Trumpet                      |
| Cole Barnett .....         | Flute, percussion            |
| Rich Bunch (Ret.) .....    | Trombone                     |
| Brant Crabbe .....         | Guitar                       |
| Viet Duong.....            | Alto sax                     |
| Richard Emmel (Ret.) ..... | Alto sax                     |
| Jon French .....           | Trombone                     |
| Harold Grappe .....        | Percussion                   |
| Kristi Hansen .....        | Trumpet (Pub. Power Council) |
| Eileen Jensen .....        | Tenor sax, clarinet          |
| Linda Krugel .....         | Flute                        |

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|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Stacy Mason .....         | Flute                      |
| Creig Millen .....        | Trumpet, percussion        |
| Mike D. Miller .....      | Trumpet, bandleader        |
| Sam Perkins .....         | Tenor sax, guitar          |
| Mark Pierce .....         | Electric bass              |
| Bob Sinclair (Ret.) ..... | Trombone, asst. bandleader |
| Mike Street.....          | Tuba                       |
| Lou Tauber .....          | Clarinet                   |
| Randi Thomas .....        | Flute                      |
| Roger Whittaker .....     | Piano                      |
| Tom Wolf.....             | Clarinet                   |